

822.95-
D745-

DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE
IN TOWN AND COUNTRY
AT HOME & ABROAD



CONTENTS

JUNE MCMXXXI

RECENT PLAYS : BY PHILIP
PAGE ■ SARAH SIDDONS : A
CENTENARY APPRECIATION BY
MRS. CLEMENT PARSONS ■
THE SOVIET THEATRE OF TO-
DAY : BY BROR DANIELSON
■ SUNDAY OPENING : BY
BERNARD SHAW, NICHOLAS
HANNAN, CEDRIC HARDWICKE

6d.

Published by
THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE
8 ADELPHI TERRACE
LONDON
W.C.

Sale
or
Hire
as
desired



AS SUPPLIED TO LEADING
LONDON AND PROVINCIAL
THEATRES AND AMATEUR
DRAMATIC SOCIETIES

**STRAND ELECTRIC
& ENGINEERING COY. LTD.**

Telephone:
Templebar
7464 (3 lines)

S.E.E.C.O.L. (Trade Mark),
24 Floral St., Covent Garden,
LONDON, W.C.2

Telegrams:
Spotlights,
Rand,
London

MISS WEBBER'S Typewriting Office

PLAYS, PARTS, AUTHORS' MSS., Etc.
VISITING SECRETARIES.
DUPLICATING.

6 Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, London, S.W. 1
(Telephone: Whitehall 8324)

THE VILLAGE DRAMA SOCIETY

(in association with the British Drama League.)

Good Historical Costumes on hire at very
low rates to players in Town and Country.
Special terms to members of the British
Drama League.

Plays for reading. Advice given.
Playwriting Competitions.

The Hon. Secretary,

THE VILLAGE DRAMA SOCIETY
274, New Cross Road, S.E. 14 Tel. No.: New Cross 4369

The Galleon Press CROYDON

The Sign of



TO-DAY, the modern
printer, blessed with good
taste, skilled craftsmen,
and an up-to-date equipment,
is able at economical prices to
produce work of the highest
merit which may claim to
rank amongst those works of
modern craftsmanship worthy

of the approbation of posterity.

It is upon these
principles that THE GALLEON
PRESS, CROYDON, executes all
its work, our unique resources
in this respect, combined with
a quick reliable service, enable
us to guarantee complete
satisfaction to all our customers

PHONE:

THORNTON HEATH 2188

Geo. B. Cotton & Co. Ltd.

Printers of the "Drama"

VO

I
play
was
a be
is n
pan
near
it is
effor
Mes
The
north
the
show
ly b
as c
echo
song
was
play
by a
not
has
Mr.
from
high
But
Jess,
whin
firm
Chap
for t
blun
tools
Th
of Si
It co

DRAMA

VOL. 9

JUNE MCMXXXI

NUMBER 9

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

By Philip Page

I CAN hardly single out "The Good Companions" at His Majesty's as the play of the month on the grounds that it was based on a book of the month (if not a book of the year); for, strictly speaking, it is not a play at all. It is partly provincial pantomime, partly a nightmare of over-acting, nearly all of it very good fun indeed. But it is certainly not a play, in spite of the clever efforts of that curiously assorted couple, Messrs. Julian Wylie and Edward Knoblock. The first scene, Jess Ockroyd's break with north-country domesticity, was so good that the knock-about business which followed showed up rather badly. Everything suddenly became sprawling and untidy, and it was as difficult to worry whether the young schoolmaster who wrote "best-seller" jazz songs would win his pierrot-troupe girl as it was to believe that those songs, which were played and sung to us, would ever be hummed by anyone. Yet fantasy and unreality need not be boring and "The Good Companions" has the great virtue of not being tedious. Mr. John Gielgud and Miss Adèle Dixon, from the Old Vic, made the mistake of being highly theatrical instead of simple and direct. But Mr. Edward Chapman, as the sterling Jess, stood out with rock-like sincerity in a whirling sea of staginess, and has become a firm favourite of the front rank. If Mr. Chapman is not spoiled by being compelled for the rest of his professional life to play a blunt Yorkshireman with a pipe and a bag of tools, he will go very far indeed.

The new Drury Lane production "The Land of Smiles" is a case of *Vox et praeterea nihil*. It comes into the realm of musical rather than

dramatic criticism, for it is wholly built around Franz Lehar's music and Herr Richard Tauber's voice which, after the first night, unfortunately failed for a week or so, the business dropping almost to nothing. Since then there has been a double recovery. But this story of a Chinese Prince and a Viennese wife, though too silly to be unpleasant is not quite silly enough for musical-comedy and not nearly silly enough for Drury Lane musical drama. As a play it is far less imbecile than, for instance, "The Song of the Drum," or "Rose-Marie." But it moves very slowly and it is fortunate that Tauber's voice is so superb and Lehar's music, though reminiscent, so tuneful. The leading lady, Miss Renè Bullard, has a powerful voice but is a poor actress. The *Chinoiserie* of Mr. Bruce Winston, exotic and mildly amusing, was a distinct success. Mr. Felix Edwardes is to be congratulated on his efficient production and Mr. Ernest Irving on the way he controls a large orchestra.

Mr. Edgar Wallace is not quite up to his "On the Spot" and "The Calendar" form in "The Dead Man," his new play at Wyndham's. But this should be, none the less, one of his most successful productions. There is about it an airy cynicism which prevents one taking too seriously the criminal portions of it, while the comedy scenes, thanks to Mr. Alfred Drayton—how attractively repellent Mr. Drayton manages to be!—and to Miss Masie Gay are most joyous. Miss Gay is rich and ripe and gloriously British; she is of the vintage of that great genius, Marie Lloyd, and knows exactly when not to overdo things. Miss Francis Doble has returned to the stage to

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

play a nebulous part rather nebulously. Mr. Jack Melford is realistically boulderish, even sartorially so. Like "The Good Companions" this is not a thing of any particular merit (save in its "slickness") but it will draw crowds—and deserves to draw them.

Mr. Charles Laughton has a superb chance for a morbid study after his own heart in "Payment Deferred" at the St. James's. There is a tendency to apply to this really live drama the detestable word "thriller." It really does thrill, but not in the sense that there are green lights and bloodstained hands and grandfather clocks with skeletons in them and poisoned draughts and horrific noises contrived in the wings by the assistant stage-

manager. It is a subtle study of a conscience-stricken murderer and his drab but devoted wife. From first to last it is almost photographic in its realism yet the story is told with dramatic skill and the construction is as brilliant as the acting of Mr. Laughton and of Miss Louise Hampton.

Photographic too, but on less sensational lines is "London Wall" at the Duke of York's. In this rather drab picture of a solicitor's office Miss Marie Ney shows us a living woman in the capable typist, yearning hopelessly for a home and a husband. The play is not too drab to be a success, and Mr. Van Druten is quite up to the fine form he showed in "After All."

THE SIDDONS CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

TO mark the hundredth anniversary of the death of Mrs. Siddons, the Mayor of Paddington (the great actress is buried in the Church Yard of St. Mary's, Paddington Green), is organising a simple ceremony at the Statue adjoining the Church, on the afternoon of Monday, June 8th.

The Mayor and Mayoress of Hereford have been invited to attend, in view of Mrs. Siddons' association with that City, and representatives of

The British Drama League

The Stage Guild

The British Actors' Equity Association will be joined by representatives of the Metropolitan Borough of Paddington. Among members of Mrs. Siddons' profession who have already expressed their intention of being present are

Dame Madge Kendal, Dame May Whitty, Lady Alexander, Sir John and Lady Martin Harvey, Lady Keeble, Miss Sybil Thorn-dike, Miss Irene Vanbrugh, Miss Hilda Trevelyan, Mr. Norman V. Norman and Miss Beatrice Wilson, and Miss Edith Craig.

The arrangements will be as follows:—

3 p.m. Reception in the Council Chamber, Paddington Town Hall.

3.15 p.m. The Mayor will preside at a short meeting, supported by the civic representatives and the representatives of the Stage.

3.50 p.m. A procession will be formed and will visit

Mrs. Siddons' Grave;

The Statue erected by public subscription to Mrs. Siddons' memory and unveiled by Sir Henry Irving in 1897;

St. Mary's Church, where Mrs. Siddons worshipped during her residence in Paddington between the years 1805 and 1817.

Wreaths will be laid; and everyone taking part in the ceremony is invited to bring flowers which will be placed at the base of the Statue and will afterwards be sent to local hospitals.

Paddington Town Hall is situated in Harrow-road, four hundred yards from the junction with Edgware-road. The old Church-yard, where Mrs. Siddons is buried; Paddington Green, where her statue stands; and the old Parish Church, adjoin the Town Hall.

The Celebrations at Hereford will take place from June 11th—13th, when a new play, "Sarah Siddons" by Mr. R. E. Abbott, will be performed at the Kemble Theatre. The cast will be mainly amateurs, but will include Miss Lillah McCarthy, Miss Joan Buckmaster; also the Misses M. & B. Siddons Downe and Mr. Rupert Siddons, great-great grand-children of Mrs. Siddons. Full particulars may be obtained from the Town Clerk, Hereford.

SARAH SIDDONS

Born 5th July, 1755—Died 8th June, 1831

By Mrs. Clement Parsons

WE think of Mrs. Siddons at the outset of her four year period (1778—82) at the Bath Theatre as one might think of some ardent young player of the present day, who, previously launched in the West End, enters at the Vic and Sadler's Wells as for a post-graduate course. We may realize her at Bath as the mother of three or four infants (and wife of a player barely worth an unflattering salary) whose family mainly depends on her earning power. We should certainly recall the bitter mortification of the dismissal from Drury Lane in 1776, the subsequent spells of casual employment with provincial stock companies, the immediate sense the Bath engagement must have given of security and a return of prestige. In Bath was to be found 'a really box-audience,' critical, judicious; theatrically, Bath was a more select London. The difference between Garrick's £5 a week and Palmer's £3 was regrettable, but benefits at nearly £150, increasing in frequency, soon freed her from what a friend of later years, Sir Walter Scott, termed 'the ignoble melancholy of pecuniary embarrassment.'

Her four years in Bath were self-discovering years. For her, as for Keats, the road to transcendence lay through application, study and thought. During the early strolling days, before her season with Garrick, ignorance had been bliss. In the Memoranda she bequeathed to Campbell she states how, at twenty, "I believed that little more was necessary than to get the words into my head, for the necessity of discrimination, and the development of character, had scarcely entered into my imagination." In this same note she describes herself sitting down to make a first acquaintance with Lady Macbeth about eighteen hours before taking the part. "As the character is very short, I thought I should soon accomplish it." What followed revealed her to herself. "I went on with tolerable composure, in the silence of the night (a night I never can forget) till I came to the assassination scene, . . . I snatched up my candle, and hurried out of the room in a paroxysm of terror. My dress was of silk, and the rustling, as I ascended the stairs, seemed to my panic-

struck fancy like the movement of a spectre pursuing me. I clapt the candlestick down upon the table, without the power of putting the candle out, and threw myself on my bed, without daring to stay, even to take off my clothes."

A more individualizing self-portrait was never painted. First, the confidence in power (common to the entire Kemble family) to memorize at hectic speed, then, the witness to intense dramatic sensibility. Gradually, out of this inflammable, malleable stuff a matchless artist would be shaped.

In Bath she both meditated and practised. The priceless gift of concentration was her birthright. A fortnight of rehearsals sufficed her at all times even for the longest part. She kept her brain fertilized by incessant consideration of her parts, and, far more than on rehearsals, relied on private study. When preparing a part she never spoke her words aloud, leaving for rehearsals that awakening of carefully matured conceptions.

Immediately upon the Bath-Bristol parade ground years came the conquest of London, instantaneous and permanent. On October 10, 1782, at 'D.L.,' as Southerne's Isabella, Mrs. Siddons, now 'turned of' twenty-seven, marched straight into the Land of Promise, possessed it and hers it remained. Later dates are relatively insignificant. In 1784 Reynolds exhibited her portrait as 'The Tragic Muse', in 1785 she played Lady Macbeth for the first time in London, in 1788 Queen Katharine, in 1789 Volumnia. In 1812 she retired, aged fifty-seven. The great night of the Restoration, 1782, set up a wave of sympathy between her and her audiences which only deepened in fervour as her power ripened. The tender enthusiasm our great-grandfathers felt for her is expressed in the contemporary statement that no man who saw Mrs. Siddons in her meridian ever pronounced her name without a tone and manner more softened and raised than his habitual discourse.

Her art bore two fruitages. The first was the expression of pathetic melodrama—what her first biographer, Boaden, terms 'gentle domestic woe'—the second was the expression

SARAH SIDDONS

of Shakespearean heroic characters, Constance and Lady Macbeth, mellowing, as her physique altered, into Queen Katharine, Volumnia and Hermione.

Her fame for pathos was established outside Shakespeare. It was as Belvidera, Lady Randolph and Mrs. Beverley she drew sobs from all London and wrote on playgoers' memories in letters of fire seemingly soulless lines such as

"Was it a miserable day?"

"Now then, kill me!"

"There's gold for thee, but see my face no more."

From the first, her acting was self-derived and original. In youth and age, whenever she spoke of her practice of her art she spoke of it as solely indebted to observation of nature. Concerning acceptance of parts, she said "if a part seems at all within nature something may be made of it." Where there was opportunity for genuine passion she knew she could grip the house, though here something might need to be set in stronger relief, there something slurred or deleted. When Johnson, in their celebrated interview, asked her 'which of Shakespeare's characters she was most pleased with' she replied that she 'thought Catherine in Henry the Eighth the most natural.'

Fidelity to nature combining with keen intelligence made her see her characters in the round. What was said of Hannah Pritchard, that she read no more than her own lengths, could decidedly not have been said of Mrs. Siddons. In her maturity, concerning her Constance in *King John*, she noted, "I never suffered my dressing-room door to be closed, in order that my attention might be fixed on those events which, by this means, I could hear going on upon the stage, the terrible effects of which were to be represented by me."

She was humble-minded. She told Mrs. Jameson she had played Lady Macbeth during thirty years, and scarcely once without carefully reading her part and generally the whole play in the morning, and that she never read the play without finding something new; "something," she added, "which had not struck me as it *ought* to have struck me." She never put a part to bed; never let an interpretation ossify. She 'used to pride herself,' says Campbell, on continuous improvement in her great characters.

At the heart of her genius beat the pulse of all fine acting, sincerity. Anna Seward found that she simply played as a woman of first-rate understanding and feeling heart would actually look and speak in the given circumstances. Kitty Clive's verdict that her acting was 'all truth and daylight' came weightily from a past-mistress who herself had been, not classic, but impressionist. Another fellow of the craft, Charles Young, made a subtler observation when he said, "Mrs. Siddons never indulged in imagination at the expense of truth." The word, truth, seemed to leap up whenever adequate observers described her work.

Where self-abnegation furthered art she sacrificed the appeal of her surpassing loveliness and substituted physical horror, as in Zara (Congreve's) self-poisoned and Jane Shore dying of hunger. Something of this realism *à outrance*—which seems so unlike the general Kemble theory of art as classic heightening—was obviously in the mind of Mrs. Siddons when, to prove to Scott that tensivity and concentration are all in all in acting, she assumed the rigid, narrowed attitude of an Egyptian statue, and with this exclusion of gesture spoke Lear's curse. She "made," Scott says, "hair rise and flesh creep." As Volumnia exultant, she "reeled across the stage, until her action lost all grace, yet became so true to nature, and so descriptive, that pit and gallery sprang to their feet, electrified."

In spite of repeated attempts in comedy the handicap remained that Sarah Siddons was grave, not volatile, by nature. "Could such a countenance be arch?" said Charles Young, who acted with her. A few judges thought otherwise. Godwin found her Portia (1786) in the missing rings scene, 'inexpressibly delightful.' Fastidious Walpole thought her 'not above' a *demigoddess* in comedy. Not without significance is it that she dressed Rosalind in Arden (as, in earlier days, Hamlet) in a shawl-like garment—"to conceal the person as much as possible"—the quoted words are hers.

Garrick and Mrs. Siddons, both of them creative geniuses, personified in an extreme degree two contrasting types of actors. Garrick was mankind's epitome; a speaking mirror; in four parts, four actors; as Grimm described him in Paris, '*naturellement singe*'; most Roscins when least David Garrick. To Mrs. Siddons this approach to art would



MRS. SIDDONS AS LADY MACBETH.
FROM THE LITHOGRAPH AFTER
HARLOW.



"LES SYLPHIDES" AT THE BALLET
CLUB, LONDON.

SARAH SIDDONS

have been impossible. She, on the contrary, unpacked for the public out of her inner consciousness the riches that were herself. She worked from within outward. First, by yielding to the flashes of a superlative power of self-excitation she became the person represented; then, inevitably, brought out the external indications. Competent observers all agree that her special magic lay in bits of dumb show neither set down in stage directions nor in the text.

Because her own personality was simple she was able to give to each impersonation extraordinary unity of design. This does not make for a variegated style, but led to convincing effects. At the same time, the dual nature, woman and artist, were in her so commingled that again and again she remarked she had acted best during some crisis of private life. Adversity experienced by herself enriched her power of feeling and expressing tragedy. "I can upon the stage give my sorrow full vent" she wrote when her beautiful daughter, Maria, lay dying.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch says that critics never even began to do Lady Macbeth justice till Mrs. Siddons taught them. No need to dwell on the oft-told tale of effects on spectators of her piercing imagination in that peerless part. Every lover of drama should study the published *marginalia* with which during her Edinburgh performances, 1809, Professor G. J. Bell annotated his *Macbeth*.

It should not be difficult to conjure up a vision of what Sarah Siddons (one's impulse is to write her name in capitals) looked like, in static, not dynamic, moments, for there never, probably, was another woman before Queen Victoria of whom so many people made portraits. The full lower lip, the long, curling nose, 'the Kemble Eye,' the deeply undercut chin—twenty-five delineations were hung, between 1783 and 1806, in the Royal Academy alone. 'The reliable Genest' said that a person who had never seen Mrs. Siddons would form a better idea of her 'figure, face and manner' from Clint's mezzotint of Harlow's *The Kemble Family in 'Henry the Eighth'* than from any description.' In view of the amazing family likeness of the whole Kemble breed it is a singular fact that so individually eloquent, so dramatic was the face of Mrs. Siddons that 'Minstrel' Beattie suggested to Reynolds (with whom on a June Sunday in 1784 he was dining)

that 'she resembled Garrick in her countenance,' and Garrick's best portrait painter, familiar with Mrs. Siddons's face through having recently painted *The Tragic Muse*, 'agreed with' Beattie. One, a man of imaginative sensibility, the other a great artist, Beattie and Reynolds knew what they meant and each understood the thought of the other. Their observation did not regard literal facts, but significance, and is a valuable note on the plastic, mobile faces, charged with possibilities, of two transcendent players.

One's thoughts linger on Mrs. Siddons in Reynolds's studio. It was she who determined the pose, listening, with raised hand, to an inspiring voice. Was a more superb compliment ever paid by one artist to another than when, as she stooped to examine what she thought a gold pattern on the edge of the drapery of the Tragic Muse Sir Joshua showed her it was his signature and said "I could not lose the honour this opportunity afforded me of going down to posterity on the hem of your garment"?

Hard not to fancy the Mrs. Siddons of private life, the lofty lady Gainsborough painted in blue with the muff, as taking precedence somewhere between a royal and ordinary duchess. We know how ultra-British a matriarch kept house with the spirit of fire and dew. We know that Melpomene always resided in an eligible neighbourhood in expensive mahogany decorum, that Sheridan, alone with her in her carriage in the dark, found her an iceberg, that she ate chops with gusto, left £50,000 and was so literal in mind and stagey of diction that, hearing someone had died in his bureau and connecting the word with a desk, not office, she heavily inquired, "How gat he there?" Such traits, even where they verge on bathos, never contravene Johnson's comment on her after her visit to Bolt Court that she 'left nothing behind her to be censured or despised.' What mattered was that her lifelong characteristic was a passion for the ideal. As Stothard said, "Her own mind was noble, and that made her acting so."

On behalf of the Guildhouse Players, (Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1), Miss Proctor would be glad to consider original MSS. of one act—or longer—plays. Casts containing a small number of men preferred.

THE SOVIET THEATRE OF TO-DAY

By Bror Danielsson

SPEAKING of Soviet policy of to-day, one cannot leave the Soviet Theatre out of account; neither can the Russian Theatre of to-day be understood or even fully dealt with if one does not see it in its real connection with Soviet Policy. In order to illustrate what I mean, I must go back to the year of 1920.

In that year a resolution to the following effect was promulgated from Moscow. "The opposition between life and art, matter and form, no longer exists. In the land of the Proletariat art is the tool, medium and outcome of production. The great end of our artistic building is (1) a complete remodelling of the old way of living and (2) the influence of art on all branches of production. To this end artist-specialists from all schools and of tendencies must be engaged under the complete control of communistic criticism. Until a new repertory has been created, the old one must be revised and recast."

This spring I had an opportunity of seeing how this project works out in Leningrad and in some smaller towns and villages. I met some of the theatrical leaders and theorists and got their main points of view. Of course I am not writing with the object of propagating communism, but from the very first I must point out how really serious the Soviet authorities are in carrying out their projects. In Soviet Russia the Theatre no longer exists for Art's sake, or even for Life's sake, but only and solely for the sake of the Soviet paradise to come.

The central organisation for all sorts of literary activities is called Rapp. The social propaganda work from the stage is carried out by means of two theatrical organisations: the Derevinski-Theatre, working in the villages and the collective farms, and the Tram-Theatre, spreading the new ideas in the towns and the factories. Both are more or less dependent on the theories worked out by Rapp, and it is proposed that in the future there shall be an absolute dependence and collaboration.

Beside the Tram—and the Derevinski-Theatres there are the professional theatres in Moscow, in Leningrad and in the capitals of the other socialistic republics. Those in Moscow are of course the leading ones and

the main facts about them you will find in Grégor Fulop-Miller's book on the Russian Theatre. They have been very much criticised in Russia on account of their tepid communistic propaganda, but thanks to Lunatscharski they have mostly remained intact and are now looked upon as central experimental studios. Their great importance for the world's theatre has been their working out of the ritual, acoustic and kinesthetic elements in the theatre and their stressing of the producer as the central factor in the theatre (but a producer who is capable of psycho-physical study of his actors in order to cast them into the dramatic unity).

But in the organisations I have just mentioned other problems are brought under consideration. It is my firm opinion that we are faced with a dramatic revival in the whole world, drama here taken in its broader sense, meaning theatre as well as cinema and broadcasting. Everywhere people begin to take an active interest in drama as it is being carried forth to everybody in the most remote spots of the world. And in Russia the government has realised the enormous value of such an educative factor and has now patronised drama, solely to spread ideas that are officially recognised by the government as promoting the future wealth of the nation.

"Derevinski" means rural. The central experimental studios of the Derevinski-Theatre are in Moscow, and from there the "Meyerhold's theatre-brigades" work through the whole country. At this very moment the Derevinski Theatre is under complete re-organisation. Up to now, according to the authorities, the work has not been active enough. The aim has been entertainment rather than Soviet propaganda. The leaders preach a new tempo, new methods and new tendencies. All art, even cinema and broadcasting must be integral in this rural movement. The rural and civic life and art must be in complete inter-communion.

Beside giving my experiences of the practical realisation of this scheme in Leningrad, I must mention two forms of communistic propaganda method. The all-devouring interest in the Russia of to-day is the carrying out of the 5-year-plan and in order to accelerate

THE SOVIET THEATRE OF TO-DAY

this work the government has invented the "social competition." In the villages, in the farms and in the factories the results of the work are booked every week; the best results are noted on a red board, the worst on a black one. Should this moral pressure not be sufficient, there exist the 'shock-brigades,' composed of the best and most effective workers, who have to activate the work wherever this is needed. Suppose a bridge has been demolished and not rebuilt. The shock-brigade is ordered there and has to work day and night at the highest speed possible until the bridge has been repaired. These two methods have also been introduced into the communist theatre.

This spring, on Jan. 15th, the Leningrad Derevinski Theatre sent out 50 students from the Conservatorium and the Music-Technical School as actors and agitators in order to accelerate the vernal "sowing-work." They were divided into these shock-brigade-theatres. The first one was sent to the northern region, the second to the flax-growing region and the third to the Novgorod district. Their main aim has been to represent on the stage the various harvest procedures and to put them into their place in the general collective evolution, in order thus to activate the work. They try to teach the peasants how to look at pleasure as the final climax of their rural work. Only in this way, they say, will the peasants look at their daily work as a pleasure and intensify their efforts. I saw these troupes in some villages and found their methods rather interesting. "The living newspaper" is an important part of their work: actual events are represented on the stage. (This is only a particular form of the dramatic-historical *reportage*, that is becoming more and more frequent on the European stages, and that must be looked upon as a real variety of dramatic art). Recommended methods are bills, placards and couplets. Very often the troupes bring with them "carcasses" from M.R.T.O. (The T.W.W. theatrical section) in Moscow. These carcasses are rough drafts of little scenes and are intended to be worked up with local material, statistics, etc. Many of these "carcasses" are rather interesting. And from a propagandist or educational point of view they are cleverly arranged. Special attention is paid to the encouragement of the sympathy and co-operation between actors and spectators that has been more and more neglected in the

theatre of our days but which is here of particular importance for the political agitation.

There is a suggested scheme for rural entertainments. I have got it from the Moscow educational department.

Introduction	1 minute
Work-results of the audience (talk, noise, singing) ..	3—5 "
The agricultural specialist gives his point of view ..	3—5 "
The shock-brigade performs current (actual) themes ..	3—5 "
Information, telegrams (living newspaper)	3—5 "
Popular songs and couplets ..	2 "
Chorus singing or dancing ..	3—5 "
Total	20—30 "

The Tram-Theatre has developed from the Leningrad Komsomol, i.e., the W.E.A. for young men and women. It was founded in 1925. In Leningrad there is now a central professional Tram-Theatre and 16 amateur Tram-"Kernels," (troupes), workers in various factories. These Tram-Kernels are rapidly spreading all over Soviet-Russia and one of the leaders boasted to me that they have 2 millions active participants in, and that 100 millions pass through the audience. The actors are intended to be shock-brigadiers not only in their theatres but also in their various factories; or in other words they have to transpose their practical experiences on to the stage, into art. Tram wants to give actual melodramas from every-day life.

In the beginning of February this year Rapp held a congress in Moscow and there it was emphasized that *Tram is looked upon as the base on which the communist theatre must be built*. In intimate collaboration between the Rapp dramaturges and the Tram shock-brigadiers has now been established. Rapp has here to lead and Tram has to follow. All this is done in order to provide against the foreboded economic failure and break-down. The "creative method" of Afigenof is to be employed—Afigenof says: "The acting, i.e., the problem of the actor and manager, must always be stressed. But the subject is our first watch-word. The Theatre as well as Art generally changes Life in changing the ideas and opinions of the people to whom it directs itself. Dialectical materialism is funda-

THE SOVIET THEATRE OF TO-DAY

mental to the development of the proletarian civilisation."

I have seen three of the most characteristic Tram-plays. In "The Thoughtful Klosch," the theme is social competition and the communist philosophy applied to the young. In Besemynskij's "Shot" the work of the shock-brigade is glorified. And in "Reclaimed Land" the collectivisation of the villages is dealt with, the central character being a tractor-station and out of its success is derived the victory of the socialist village over the old one. As to the production of these plays I can do no better than quote the words of Cokolovskij, the leader of the Leningrad Tram: "Light, gesture, and movement are the three main elements of our theatre."

As my general experience of the Leningrad theatres I must say that there seem to be very few really good plays in the Soviet Repertory. And where old plays are acted, they have been entirely re-made in order to suit the communist philosophy. But from a dramatic point of view they are not satisfying. An outstanding feature is the dramatic *reportage*. During the performance of Verhaeren's "Dawn" in Kamerny Theatre in Moscow in 1921 there arrived the famous message about the conquest of Perikop. The telegram was read in the very middle of the performance and it corresponded so well with the atmosphere of the play that it became an institution and started an insertion of all sorts of political actualities into plays, in order to brisk them up. Piscator has often practised this method in Berlin and when in 1930 the Revolution of 1905 was to be commemorated, they had no appropriate drama in Moscow, so the Art's Theatre 2 dramatised the news—paper material and the historical documents. But the result is not a good advertisement for the method.

The dumb show has developed, but agitation and propaganda are unfortunately dominating. The crass 'bio-mechanical' materialism is baked into the plays. A striking feature is the physical culture demanded of every actor. There is a saying in Leningrad: "The neurasthenics of the pre-revolutionary theatre have been liquidated."

Classical operas are still played in Leningrad, but attempts are made to create a new style. The need is felt for a "revolutionary musical language," equivalent to the dramatic expressionism. A "synthesis of proletarian dramaturgy and proletarian music" is the object.

The emotional propaganda value of music is stressed, but at the same time the difficulty of using it to "systemise" thoughts and ideas. The criticism on the old opera is that "the music cannot directly photograph and record external events, but must grow out of speech as a culminating point." The aim is "the wholly emotional melodrama, that depicts the hero, the communistic class, in an ascending curve."

Thus the Soviet people have understood that Drama cannot stand all by itself, and that it is the right and duty of the government to regard the theatre as part of its policy of national education. The professional theatres are more or less independent, but their experiences form the basis of the amateur movement that is controlled by the government. It appears that the authorities have been right in presuming a latent interest for drama everywhere among the people, and drama will probably do a great deal to prevent the dreaded catastrophic break-down, in fusing the people together to a conscious social unity. Russia has not yet many new plays to give the world, nor has it always shown the best way of playing the old ones, but it now shows us how to leaven a whole people, or rather nearly 200 peoples, with an active interest for drama. And this is a great thing, even in the eyes of those like myself who do not believe in the benefactions of communism.

THEATRICAL GARDEN PARTY

The organisers of the Theatrical Garden Party, which is to be held this year on Tuesday, June 16th at the Royal Hospital Gardens, Chelsea, are now busily engaged in sorting out the original suggestions and offers of help received from the numerous "stars" of the Stage and Screen, who are rallying to the cause in a splendid manner, with the obvious intention of making this year's Party an even greater success than usual. Among some of the new shows, Mr. Archie de Bear is presenting a Potted Revue, performed by artists drawn from the casts of his "Chelsea Follies" and "At the Sign of the Seven Dials"; Sir Gerald du Maurier is again presenting the "Grand Giggle," a burlesque of burlesques, with an all-star cast; the B.B.C. are holding Cabaret Teas at which a continuous performance will be given by all the broadcasting favourites. Mr. Andre Charlot and his Savoy Theatre Company will be in charge of a "Wonder Bar," where one will not only be able to sip the nectar of the gods, but indulge in a flutter at the Tables.

These are only a few of the numerous attractions offered in this wonderful show, for which tickets are 3s. before the day and 5s. on the day itself, obtainable at all Theatres and Ticket Agencies.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF

THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

President :
LORD HOWARD DE WALDEN.

Chairman of the Council :
H. GRANVILLE-BARKER.

Secretary : GEOFFREY WHITWORTH.

Hon. Treasurer : ALEC REA.

MSS. for publication in DRAMA will be considered if accompanied by stamps for return if unsuitable. All Enquiries should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, at the Office of the League, 8 Adelphi Terrace, London, W.C.2.

Telephone : TEMPLE BAR 8507-8.

Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

The Annual General Meeting of the British Drama League will take place in the library at 8 Adelphi Terrace, London, at 2.30 p.m. on Friday, June 26th. This year some more than ordinarily important business is to be transacted, as will be seen from the Agenda which will soon be circulated to all members of the League. We hope, therefore, that the date of the meeting will be duly noted by all who can possibly be present, and that we may have a record attendance. Voting for the provincial representation on the Council will proceed during the early days of this month. During the past twelve months the participation of these representatives in the management of the League has been wonderfully helpful. We could wish, however, that the various constituencies showed a greater zeal both in nominating candidates and in voting.

Since the break-up of Diaghilew's Russian Ballet there have been sporadic efforts to maintain the tradition of ballet dancing in this country. The Camargo Society has gathered together some exponents of the art on Sunday evenings from time to time, and now the Old Vic—Saddlers Wells combination have staged some excellent performances by members of their School. What we regard, however, as perhaps the most interesting and hopeful conception in this kind is the new Ballet Club, directed by Marie Rambert, Ashley Dukes and Arnold Haskell, which has been established at 2a, Ladbroke Road, London, W.11. There will be found a very charming Little Theatre, and a company of Mlle. Rambert's pupils who have attained a high degree of skill, and give promise of contributing something of their own to the further development of an English School of Ballet.

An interesting addition to the programme of the Norwich School is the complete Beginners' Course, which will be conducted by Miss Isabel Chisman, and will include Verse-speaking and Folk-song-mime. A modern verse play, with advanced students in the leading parts, will also be a feature of the course. From July 29th to August 1st, the School coincides with the Maddermarket Theatre Festival of 16th and 17th century plays, dances and music. This event is likely to bring many distinguished visitors to Norwich. Already Mr. Lawrence Housman and Professor George P. Baker, of Yale University, have booked seats. Both, it is hoped, will address the students.

The character of the School at St. Andrews from July 20th to 31st, has already been sufficiently foreshadowed in these columns. Last year a good proportion of English students attended, and we would remind our readers that though situated in Scotland, the School is planned with no exclusive regard to a Scottish atmosphere, students from both above and below the Border will find themselves equally at home.

RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by Norman Marshall

"On Dramatic Method." By Harley Granville-Barker. Sidgwick and Jackson. 5s.

"Post Mortem." By Noel Coward. Heinemann.

5s. "The Anatomist." By James Bridie. Constable. 7s. 6d.

"Peasant Costume in Europe." By Kathleen Mann and J. A. Corbin. Black. 12s. 6d.

THE title of Mr. Granville-Barker's new book may have led some people to hope that he was going to tell them how to write a play. They will be sadly disappointed. In an age which, according to Mr. Granville-Barker, runs too much to criticism rather than to un-selfconscious creation, he is utterly opposed to the type of didactic criticism which formulates the principles of play-writing. "The would-be dramatist is encouraged to think that he has only to pin up a set of rules like a recipe over his desk and to follow them and all will be well. But this is how puddings are made, not plays; not good plays certainly, nor the best of puddings for that matter."

Mr. Granville-Barker admits no laws of play-writing; "there are only the natural laws of the medium in which plays exist, the laws of the theatre, that is to say"; and there is only one "natural" way of learning these laws—by being in intimate contact with the theatre, behind the curtain or before it. Yet in spite of Mr. Granville-Barker's refusal to formulate laws and principles, this is the ideal book for the would-be playwright. Because it is the work of a writer who is not only a practising playwright but also a great producer, it deals brilliantly with "the cardinal part of the dramatist's problem," the part which merely literary writers on the subject ignore altogether: how best to provide for the collaboration of the actor. "Collaboration it has to be. Interpretation understands the case . . . The character as it leaves the dramatist's hands has to be re-created in terms of the actor's personality; and the problem for the dramatist is how to write it so that he may prevent it—his character—from perishing in the process."

Three of the five lectures printed in this book deal directly with dramatic method; of the remaining two, one is an examination of Shakespeare's progress from the point of view that it was his passionate interest in human beings which carried him to supremacy as a dramatist; the other explodes the idea that Restoration comedy is a revealing picture of the manners and morals of the time. "It is no more a picture of the time than are Mr. Aldous Huxley's satirical novels of the life of the average England of to-day. It was, in this respect, a flattering of the little Court clique and their anobish disciples, upon whose patronage the theatre depended . . . The plays no more reflect the average morality of the time than a Palais Royal farce reflects home life in France."

Mr. Noel Coward's play is a "good theatre" but little more. According to his publishers, Mr. Coward "has asked himself whether our Western civilisation has learnt anything from the war." The question is hardly as original as the publishers seem to imagine. It is a question which anybody of even the mildest intelligence has presumably asked himself many times. Nor is Mr. Coward's reply to the question particu-

larly original. His play is merely the usual story of post-war disillusionment, without a single idea which is not thoroughly trite and platitudinous. It is the manner of the play rather than its matter which is interesting. The writing is full of ingenious tricks of stagecraft, with some neat combinations of expressionism and realism. The story of the soldier who comes back to earth thirteen years after his death in France is handled with so sure a sense of the stage and with so much speed and vigour, that in the theatre it would probably be thoroughly effective, especially if produced by Mr. Coward, who is every bit as clever a producer as he is a playwright. But it is too theatrical a piece of work to make much of a show on paper. In cold print it seems as tawdry as a stage costume seen in the chill light of day.

The outstanding feature of the three plays in Mr. Bridie's book is the opportunities they give to the actor. There is no really "big" part in any of them, but the characterisation in all of them is so richly done that there is hardly a single part, however small, which does not give some chance for good, solid acting. "The Anatomist," which is based on an incident in the life of Dr. Robert Knox, is constructed on rather happy-go-lucky lines, but it provides a brilliant portrait of an extraordinary character, and vividly recreates the atmosphere of Edinburgh in the early part of the last century. The author claims no more for this play than the title of "an entertainment," and as an entertainment it is first-rate, with lively characterisation, plenty of action and incident, any amount of local colour, and some nice touches of gruesomeness. "Tobias and the Angel" is a variation on the Apocryphal theme, handled with a whimsicality which at times comes perilously close to mere facetiousness. But the play as a whole has exceptional charm and humour, with some finely dramatic moments and a continual under-current of seriousness. The third play, "The Amazed Evangelist," is a one-acter in which Mr. Bridie has a theme which allows him to be as fantastic as he likes, so he enjoys himself thoroughly. When the play is produced, the actors and the audience will probably enjoy themselves nearly as much as the author. This is an unusually interesting book of plays by an author of real originality.

"Peasant Costume in Europe" deals with its subject in an admirably clear and concise manner, mainly by means of illustrations. The notes and pictures are equally good in their avoidance of unnecessary and distracting detail, and Miss Mann's drawings are charming and amusing in themselves as well as being excellent examples of well designed stage costumes. The get-up of the book is exceptionally attractive. Decidedly a book to possess for the sake of the illustrations and the format, even if one is not particularly interested in the subject. It is quite the most attractive and entertaining book on costume I have yet read.

A copy of the latest edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* has been added to the Reference Library of the League at 8 Adelphi Terrace.

SUNDAY OPENING

In our last issue appeared the views of Sir Barry Jackson, Mr. St. John Ervine and Mr. John Gielgud, all in favour of the Sunday Opening of Theatres. Here, as promised, we print some opinions in the contrary sense.

Mr. BERNARD SHAW

As an author I stand to gain by a seven day week for actors and theatre staff. Theatre landlords are in the same position. Generally speaking, all who work daily in the theatre stand to lose by a seven day week, and all who take money out of the theatre without working daily there for it stand to gain. All attempts to avert this result will fail sooner or later under the pressure of competition for a livelihood and for opportunities to act. Not only will payment for seven days be no greater than it is now for six, but Sunday will become a matinée day; and the eight performances which have long since taken the place of the six performances which I am old enough to remember will become 10 performances.

If I were an actor or a member of a theatre staff I should be agitating for the reduction of the seven day week to five, and the vigorous extension of the Factory Acts to the theatres to prevent the excessive exploitation of actors by extra matinées, two shows a night, and reckless disregard of their common humanity, at all-night and Sunday rehearsals.

But then if I were an actor I should probably be a political idiot and an economic ignoramus as well, and should be sweated accordingly.

Mr. NICHOLAS HANNEN

Primarily my active and public opposition to the opening of theatres on Sunday is undertaken on behalf of the actor, whose point of view as expressed in the manifesto of the Stage Guild is being entirely ignored by certain eminent gentlemen in the Theatrical profession including the three whose views appear in the last number of "Drama."

Actors are the basic product from which the theatre has been and is built up. The efficiency and well being of the actor for the exercise of his art should be the chief concern of everybody connected with the theatre.

I profoundly disagree with Sir Barry Jackson. Leisure has become so precious that every moment of it must be preserved—not "*used*" as he says—and it is upon this fact that the opposition to Sunday Theatres is rightly based. Leisure is more precious to the actor in the exercise of his art, than to anyone else and as a minister of entertainment

he has as much, if not more, right "to its true enjoyment" in "the comparative tranquillity of Sunday."

Once open the Theatres on Sunday and you *force* the actor to work on the one day in the week when, to those who seek it, peace and tranquillity and leisure are "in the air."

Mr. St. John Ervine in his advocacy of Sunday opening of Theatres has simply ignored the actor. As a dramatist and critic perhaps he thinks that the right attitude to adopt—but does he really think that the entertainment money that is spent on the cinemas would be used for the Theatres if they were open?

Does Mr. Gielgud really think that "the business class" would hurry back from its week-ends or that "we shall cease to have salaries beaten down" if the Theatres are open on Sunday?

Sunday opening of Theatres, and the agitation to get them open, is the last bad, mad, gambler's throw of those who wish to perpetuate, *at the expense of the actor*, a state of affairs that had grown up and is only tolerable in times of prosperity. Let the rents come down, and the library percentages, and the agents fees and the overhead charges and inflated salaries, but for God's sake leave the actor's Sunday alone.

Mr. ROBERT ATKINS

In reply to your enquiry as to my attitude towards the Sunday opening of theatres—I am opposed to the movement.

I believe the country as a whole will be against it. The advocates of Sunday opening are hoping that Parliament will legislate in their favour, but if so it is to be hoped that the present L.C.C. system of opening for charity will be done away with and the opening be on a commercial basis. This will bring the parties that matter face to face—Managers and acting profession. The issue is and must be between them. The managers think that they will make money by opening on Sunday—their opponents are doubtful of the economic benefit to the manager and still more doubtful of the economic benefit to the actor; there is also the question of individual liberty on Sunday.

SUNDAY OPENING

With the inclusion of Sunday as a working day the six-day week is glibly passed from tongue to tongue, but naturally the right to open for seven days will be pressed for.

It can be assumed, I think, that if the public are not supporting certain plays during the week, they are not going to rush to their aid on Sunday—on the other hand, successful plays are not going to gain by closing one night during the week and opening on Sunday.

The cry that certain monies going into Sunday Cinemas might be diverted to the theatre is I think an empty one. There is little evidence of any great demand for the theatre on Sunday and still less that it would be an economic success.

Where it has been allowed in America, failure is reported. American Equity's advice to English actors is to fight the Sunday performances tooth and nail.

If Parliament legalises Sunday opening, its practical application will be entirely in the hands of the acting profession; should they wish to do so they may prevent its general adoption; should they favour it, their fate will be of their own choosing.

The innovation will, I think, lower the prestige of the actor in the eyes of the nation, and form one more link in a chain of changes that will lower the prestige of the nation in the eyes of the world.

MR. CEDRIC HARDWICKE

While I approve whole-heartedly of any innovation which will benefit the theatre and the actor, I cannot believe that Sunday opening of theatres would be genuinely helpful. The audiences which fill London Cinemas on Sunday nights, are not, I think, the usual theatre-going public, and certainly not what we call the "stalls public." Those who are in the habit of paying 12s. for a seat usually have pleasant homes, and, possibly, golf, tennis, and motoring to amuse them. They entertain at home, and visit their friend's homes. I cannot believe that the "stall public" will readily fall into the habit of going—in evening dress—to theatres on Sunday nights.

Without this support the theatres could no more pay on a Sunday than on a Monday. So long as the theatres have to depend on their 12s. stalls, they will be dependent on those people who can afford comfortable houses, motor-cars, week-end cottages, and other Sunday diversions.

I should like the theatres to be open for those who want Sunday entertainment, although I doubt if Sunday opening would prove commercially profitable, unless the theatres can compete with the cinemas in comfort and cost. If managers wish to open their theatres on Sundays, they must start by having large numbers of cheap (and comfortable) seats.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

EXETER

The Exeter Drama League has had a pleasant and successful year in spite of financial depression.

We had the honour of entertaining the National Conference of the British Drama League from 31st October to 2nd November. Our productions have been—A triple Bill consisting of "The Man of Destiny" (Shaw), "The House Fairy" (Housman), "The Dumb Wife of Cheapside" (Ashley Dukes), "Old English" (Galsworthy), "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" (Hardy), "Pygmalion and Galatea" (W. S. Gilbert), and "By Candle Light" (Harry Graham from the German of Siegfried Geyer)—The last had to be substituted for a Shakespearean comedy owing to illness.

We entered the last act of "The Dumb Wife" for the National Festival. This won the Divisional Competition at Exmouth and was well received at the Sub-Area Competition at Plymouth.

THE BEACONSFIELD PLAYERS.

Having devoted the earlier part of the season to serious work, including a Festival entry, the Beaconsfield Players Club went on a little dramatic holiday on April 24th in "The Sport of Kings." By doing this piece with the abandon and vigour so essential, and yet so rare, when amateurs attempt farce, the club not only had a rollicking time but proved its "all-round" capabilities.

The presentation was notable for careful casting, resourceful stage management, (all the scenery and

properties were made by the members), production work in which nothing had been left to chance, and acting, all of which was ahead of the usual and some of which was fully up to professional standards. Except for minor "maskings," a tame "curtain" to Act II. and an occasional slackening of the pace, there was little to criticise in the performance. The diction and deportment of the players were exceptionally good, and it was obvious that the society was well in line with the new spirit in the amateur theatre.

JOHN BOURNE.

THE SHEFFIELD PLAYGOERS

The Sheffield Playgoers believe in variety in production. The Society is one of the few amateur societies in the country, for example, to stage Bernard Shaw's "Back to Methuselah" in its entirety. Occasionally, however, the Society goes to the other extreme and serves up farce. On April 21st they staged for the first time on any stage "The Compulsory Wife" by Rowland Moorwood and John Glyder.

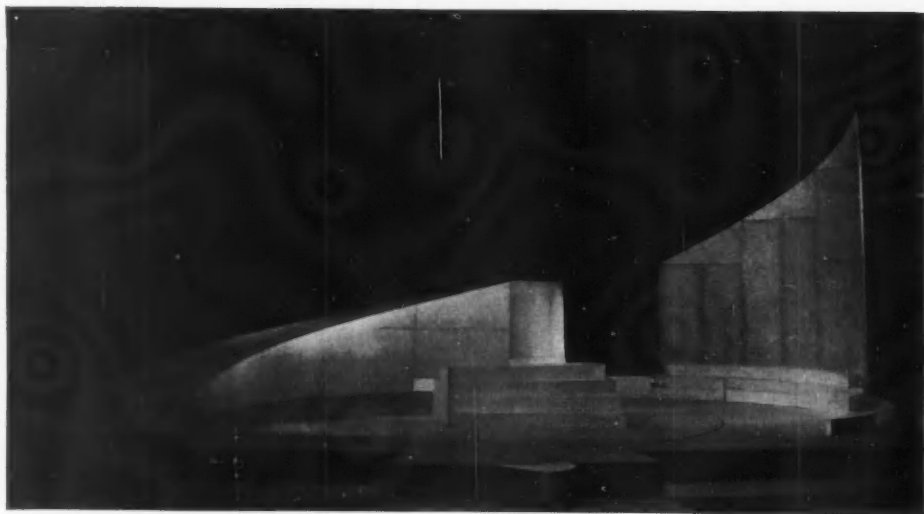
The latter is the author of the novel of the same name, and the former is a well-known Sheffield amateur who has previously adapted a Wodehouse novel for the stage. Mr. Moorwood also took the leading role, as well as acting as producer. This was probably a mistake, as few people however gifted can safely take a triple function in a production. The piece is on the lines of the Ben Travers farces, and may make a commercial success.

H.S.W.



"NIT GEDAIGET," ACT I. SCENE IN
GHETTO PRIOR TO LEAVING FOR
COLLECTIVE FARMS. PRODUCED BY
ALEXIS GRAROVSKY, LATE DIRECTOR
OF MOSCOW JEWISH STATE THEATRE.





SCENE FROM "HENRY VIII," FESTIVAL
THEATRE, CAMBRIDGE.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

BRISTOL

The Folk House Players have had a most interesting season, having given three full-length plays, besides entering a one-act play for the Drama League Contest, and taking part in the Clifton Arts Club Competition for Original One-Act Plays.

In this latter competition, the Players, under the direction of Mrs. F. W. Rogers, producer for the Folk House Players, presented, "Out of Court," by Miss Davies, and this play was successful in winning the competition. Mr. John Fernald, the Adjudicator, described the play as, "An excellent piece of work and an excellent example of the importance of character compared with plot . . . Miss Davies has done something truly creative." "The cast were all good. Miss Green as 'Clara Bartlett' was the best, for her great repose and restraint marked her out from the others."

"The Tinker's Wedding," by Synge, was entered for the Drama League Contest. Mr. F. W. K. Fraser, in his adjudication, said, "In many ways this was the best production of the division . . ."

The three plays given during the season, were "Joy" by Galsworthy, "Candida" by Shaw, and Ralph Roister Doister" by Nicholas Udall. This last play, given in the costume of the period, and including

songs and dances, was carried through in splendid style, and provided much merriment among the audience.

BOARD OF EDUCATION DRAMATIC SOCIETY

The Board of Education Co-operative Theatre, in presenting Anstey's adaption of Molière's comedy "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" on the 21st and 22nd of April last, gave the merriest performance of their career. The Gallic mordancy of the original acquires in this adaption an infusion of the geniality of English comedy, and H. C. Parker, who played M. Jourdain with admirable art, continued this dulcifying process by accenting the kindlier aspects of the would-be-gentleman's character. Amongst the women Marion Gosset as Mme. Jourdain and Ellen Smith as Nicole were notably good; on the men's side R. G. Gosling's firm and finished performance as Corvielle and some pleasant fooling by E. L. Turnbull and G. R. Tytherleigh as M. Jourdain's lackeys left the pleasantest memories.

A Bacchanal and an Oriental dance, given by a troupe of dancers newly-recruited from the theatre's membership, added greatly to the grace and gaiety of the production, which was pleasantly rounded off with an epilogue, in the eighteenth-century manner, written for the occasion by the producer, James Laver.

K.M.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AUTHORS' FEES

SIR,

Referring to a recent article in "The Observer" (April 26th, 1931 issue). The concluding paragraph seems to offer a solution of the "Royalties" question and because of this statement I take the liberty to refer to the proposal in the columns of DRAMA.

Mr. St. John Ervine appears to suggest that if societies will agree amongst themselves, authors would assist them by letting their plays be read or acted without the threat of legal proceedings when royalties are not paid.

I think a performing rights organisation could be formed to which all amateur societies would pay an amount based on their membership and this would allow them to read or act all plays to their members without any further charge.

Public performances would continue as at present and full Royalty fees paid independent of the sum subscribed to the proposed "Performing Rights Organisation." A society interested in affairs dramatic would be asked to pay a levy, say sixpence per member, and the amount realised would be paid to the Organisation.

A society where the members pay a subscription to join has, say, 20 members, a levy of sixpence per head would be 10s., larger memberships would be able to pay larger amounts and this ought to be fair to all societies. The levy would be paid at the beginning of each session and this would allow all plays to be read or acted by amateurs without any other charge. It appears to me that Mr. St. John Ervine's article is very fair and no society wishes to take advantage of authors efforts and yet unless organisations are wealthy it is impossible to pay the Royalty fees.

Perhaps the British Drama League will take this matter up and try to end the present unsatisfactory state of affairs which surrounds the question of Royalties.

Yours faithfully,

GEO. TURNER.

FESTIVAL PRODUCERS

SIR,

At the soiree which followed the National Festival Final, the question of the professional production of entries for the Festival was discussed at considerable length and the cases for and against this argued with considerable clarity. If it is giving a rich club unfair advantage to allow professional assistance, and yet depriving the amateur of invaluable assistance not to allow it, is there not still the middle course?

Could not the rules governing the Festival entries be so amended as to allow any producer to be engaged, on the condition that no fee was accepted for work done in connection with the Festival? In this way amateurs would not be deprived of the advantages which must accrue from the assistance of men and women who have studied stagecraft for years, and only such professional producers would volunteer their services as had a genuine interest in and desire to assist the Amateur Theatre.

Yours sincerely,

ERIC HOLMES.

DRAMA HOLIDAYS

SIR,

May I make a suggestion to those of your members who may be at a loss for some objective to their holiday this year? The arts of the stage assume a new charm when viewed under the conditions of travel, and while August closes many theatres in London and elsewhere, it brings in other places wonderful opportunities for the theatre lover. In England, at Malvern and at Stratford, abroad at Salzburg and at Munich, there will be much to delight the most pertinacious stage enthusiast—and all these places are in themselves excellent holiday centres.

Yours faithfully,

"ON TOUR."

TWELFTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

To be presented at the Annual General Meeting, to be held at 8 Adelphi Terrace,
on Friday, June 26th, 1931, at 2.30 p.m.

IN submitting the Twelfth Annual Report of the British Drama League, the Council are able to report another year of progress. On June 30th, 1930, the League's membership stood at 3,059. It is now 3320.

During the year 770 new members have joined. There have been 509 resignations. The number of affiliated societies now on the register is 1977.

PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATION ON THE COUNCIL.

The arrangements made for provincial representation on the Council have worked satisfactorily and a full complement of representatives has been obtained by means of ballot papers circulated among the ten areas.

NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF COMMUNITY DRAMA.

The Fifth National Festival of Community Drama was organised by the National Festival Committee consisting of Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth (Chairman), Mr. F. E. Doran, Miss Elsie Fogerty, Mr. C. B. Purdon (Hon. Treasurer), Mr. Harold Ridge, Mr. George O. Sharman with the addition of the following who were appointed representatives of the four Areas into which the country was divided for the purposes of the Festival: Dr. C. Bernard Childs, Mr. Campbell Buchan and Mr. D. Glen MacKemmie (Scottish Area), Mr. John Hirst (Northern Area), Mr. Boughton Chatwin and Mr. C. M. Haines (Western Area), Mr. B. J. Benson and Mr. George Williams (Eastern Area). 490 groups competed in all as compared with 390 last year, and Area and Divisional Festivals were held during February and March, preliminary judging having been undertaken locally. The judges appointed by the Council of the League were Mr. Lennox Robinson for the Scottish Area, Mr. Norman Marshall for the Northern Area, Mr. Edward Lewis for the Western Area and Mr. Miles Malleon for the Eastern Area. The Scottish Area having the larger number of entries was entitled to send two teams for the National Final in London.

The five teams selected competed at the Final Festival held on April 20th, at the Globe Theatre London kindly lent by Mr. Maurice Browne. The programme was as follows:—

The Liverpool Playgoers Club	in "The Thrice-Promised Bride"	by Cheng-Chin Hsiung.
The Pioneer Club Bournemouth	in "The Kingdom of God" (Act 111)	by Sierra.
Falkirk High School F.P.		
Dramatic Circle (A)	in "Ardvorlich's Wife"	by Gordon Bottomley.
Sonning Village Players	in "What would you do?"	by M. Reid-Jamieson.
The Magnet Club Edinburgh	in "The Sisters' Tragedy"	by Richard Hughes.

The judges were Miss Edith Craig, Mr. Cedric Hardwicke, and Mr. Charles Morgan. They awarded the Cup to the Falkirk High School F.P. Dramatic Circle. The Right Hon. J. R. Clynes, P.C., M.P., had kindly consented to present the Cup, but owing to official duties at the House of Commons was unable to be present and his place was taken by Mrs. Clynes.

The Award for the best original play entered in the Festival was made by Mr. W. A. Darlington to Mr. Philip Blair for his play "Drumgarth" produced by the Blairgowrie Operatic and Dramatic Society.

The Council are pleased to report that they have received from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, promise of a grant of £250 annually for the next four years, which is to be expended on assisting Festival Adjudications in English Areas.

AUTUMN CONFERENCE.

The Autumn Conference of members and affiliated societies was held at Exeter from Oct. 31st to Nov. 2nd, by kind invitation of the Exeter Drama League.

On Friday, October 31st, delegates were welcomed by the Mayor of Exeter at an evening reception in the Guildhall. On Saturday Nov. 1st, the Business Conference was held under the Chairmanship of Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth. The full minutes of the meeting were circulated in the December number of "Drama." In the evening a Banquet was held at Deller's Restaurant at which the chief speaker was Mr. St. John Irvine. After the Banquet members of the Conference and a large number of the general public witnessed a performance of three plays—"The Man of Destiny" (Bernard Shaw), "The House Fairy" (Laurence Housman), and "The Dumb Wife of Cheapside" (Ashley Dukes). These plays were performed by members of the Exeter Drama League. On Sunday morning seats were reserved for delegates for the service in the Cathedral at which a special sermon was preached by the Very Rev. the Dean of Exeter. In the afternoon the Dean and Mrs. Gamble welcomed over 130 delegates to tea at the Deanery and finally in the evening delegates were invited to a Reception at University College.

The thanks of the Council are due to Miss Cecily Radford and her colleagues of the Exeter Drama League for the excellent arrangements of the Conference, and also to the Dean and Mrs. Gamble and to the College Authorities for their hospitality.

NATIONAL THEATRE.

The Council desire to place on record their sense of the deep loss which the cause of the National Theatre has suffered by the death, in April, 1930, of one of its most loyal and zealous supporters, the late Sir Israel Gollancz.

Early in 1930 the Joint Committee, appointed by the meeting convened by the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre Committee at the House of Commons on November 25th, 1929, completed its draft scheme for a National Theatre. This scheme was submitted to a further meeting of those interested in the movement held at the House of Commons on February 10th, 1930, and was approved. The scheme was privately submitted to the Prime Minister by Lord Lytton. The Prime Minister intimated that while in sympathy with the proposals outlined in the scheme it was unlikely at the present time that the Government could take any practical action. In view of this the Council has decided that an effort should be made, in association with the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre Committee, to estimate the amount of public support throughout the country which might be expected to be behind the scheme if it were presented at a more propitious moment. The preparations for such an enquiry are now in hand.

VILLAGE DRAMA SOCIETY.

188 Village Groups are now jointly affiliated to the Village Drama Society and the British Drama League, one half of their subscriptions being paid by the League to the Village Drama Society.

As a result of certain informal conversations the Council appointed Miss Ashwell, Mrs. Nesfield Cookson, Mr. Rea and Mr. Whitworth to meet an equal number of representatives of the Village Drama Society with a view to discussing the possibilities of amalgamation between the two bodies. Two meetings were held under the Chairmanship of Captain Ellis, the Secretary of the National Council of Social Service. Captain Ellis has since furnished a memorandum stating his views as to the basis on which such an amalgamation could take place, and negotiations are proceeding.

MAGAZINE.

The circulation of the magazine is increasing though not so rapidly as the Council could wish. Members and secretaries of affiliated societies are reminded that there is still much to be done by way of bringing the magazine to the notice of the general public and to the members of affiliated societies.

JUNIOR DRAMA COMMITTEE.

The work of this Committee has been chiefly confined during the year to the Annual Competition between Elementary Dramatic Societies in London. For some obscure reason the entries for the competition fell this year to 19; and the Committee is at present considering the advisability of altering the basis and the conditions under which the competition is held. The Senior Trophy was won by the St. Giles' L.C.C. Institute, playing "Early Birds," and the Intermediate Trophy by the Oxford and St. George's Boys' Club, playing a scene from "Strife." The judges were Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth and Mr. Harold Ridge.

The Committee reports with deep regret the death of Miss Maude Scott, its Chairman, whose ability, experience and enthusiasm has been of inestimable value in its work.

DRAMA AND EDUCATION.

On Friday January and a meeting of the Conference of Educational Associations was held at University College, Gower Street, the subject being "The National Theatre in the World of Education." The speakers were Miss Lena Ashwell, Miss Elsie Fogerty and Sir Barry Jackson.

Under this heading the Council also has to report that the Théâtre Classique Universitaire have paid two further visits to this country and have played at 30 Schools and Universities to a total audience of over 20,000 students. The visits were organised by Mr. T. R. Dawes. A further tour of this country is being arranged for October. Sir Archibald Flower gave a lunch at Stratford-on-Avon to the members of the Company and a bronze palm was laid by M. Toudouze on Shakespeare's tomb in the name of the National Conservatoire and of the University of Paris. Mr. T. R. Dawes attended this function as a representative of the British Drama League.

SIDDONS CENTENARY.

At the request of the Town Clerk of Hereford the League has rendered considerable assistance in regard to the celebrations at Hereford on the occasion of the centenary of the death of Mrs Siddons on June 8th. It has also been arranged for Sir John Martin Harvey, on behalf of the League, to speak at the Memorial Celebration organized by the Mayor of Paddington at the statue of Mrs. Siddons adjacent to the Church of St. Mary's, Paddington Green.

LECTURES AND ADJUDICATIONS.

Over one hundred lectures and adjudications have been given through the instrumentality of the League. This work has been undertaken amongst others by Mr. Norman Marshall, Mr. Reginald Denham, Mr. Cyril Wood, Miss Elsie Fogerty, Miss Edith Craig, Mr. Percy Allen, Mr. Mordaunt Shairp, Mr. Edward Lewis, Miss Margaret Macnamara, Miss Mary Kelly, Mrs. Nesfield Cookson, Mr. Harold Rubinstein, Mr. Robert Newton, Mr. John Bourne, Mr. Eric Holmes etc.

ASSISTANCE TO PLAYWRIGHTS.

Reports on 104 original plays have been sent to members during the past twelve months.

An extension to the work of the League in respect of dramatic education has also been initiated in the form of a Postal Course of instruction in the Elements of Play writing. The course is in ten lessons

which are sent through the post and the papers written by students are criticised. At the end of the course every student is encouraged to write a play which obtains careful criticism. Mr. Edward Lewis has been appointed as the first Director of Studies and already over 20 students have enrolled.

DRAMA SCHOOLS.

Summer Vacation Schools were held at the Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich, from July 24th to August 1st—and at the University Hall of Residence, St. Andrew's—from August 18th to 28th. At Norwich Mr. Nugent Monck gave lectures on the History of English Drama, illustrating by short scenes and plays, presented by the Norwich Players, ranging from a fourteenth century Nativity to a modern realistic drama, "Shadows of Strife." Rehearsals of plays and ballad-mimes were conducted by Mr. Tyrone Guthrie; of ballad-mimes by Miss Isabel Chisman; lectures were contributed by Mr. Martin Browne, Mrs. Nesfield Cookson and Miss Mary Kelly. At St. Andrew's, where the League was for a second year working with the Scottish Community Drama Association, the opening address was given by Mr. Gordon Bottomley; rehearsals were conducted by Mr. W. G. Fay and Mr. Charles Thomas; Mr. Duncan Clark held classes in Choral Verse-speaking, and Miss Macnamara lectured.

A Religious Drama School, at Bourne-mouth, from December 1st to 6th, organised on behalf of the Religious Drama Society, was opened by the Bishop of Winchester. Demonstration-rehearsals were conducted by Mr. Martin Browne, assisted by Miss Henzie Raeburn and Miss Diana Christie; classes were held by Miss Chisman and Mrs. Nesfield Cookson; lectures delivered by the Rev. Seaward Beddow, Mr. John Hampden, Mr. Laurence Housman, Mr. Kenneth Ingram, Miss Mary Kelly, Miss Macnamara, Mrs. Lois Shiner and Mr. Whitworth. Performances were given by the Norwich Players, the Sussex Franciscan Players, the Community Players of St. Edmunds, Salisbury, the boys of the St. Nicholas School of Church Music (conducted by Dr. Sidney Nicholson) and by the small pupils of Miss Heasman.

At Easter two Schools were undertaken. The Fifth London School (April 13th to 25th), at King's College for Women, Kensington, was residential. Miss Edith Craig conducted rehearsals; classes were held by Miss Elsie Fogerty, Mrs. Cookson and Mr. Edward Lewis. Miss Christie assisted as Stage Manager. Lectures were given by Mr. Beddow, and Miss Macnamara. A Soirée was held at which the guests included ten of the adjudicators in the National Festival. The improvised "skit" and mime-work at the Mummings' Party was the best in its kind that any of our Schools have produced.

At St. Ives (April 8th to 22nd) the School was opened by Her Highness, the Ranee Margaret of Sarawak. Rehearsals of plays and ballad-mimes were conducted by Mr. Charles Thomas and Miss Chisman. A new feature was a class for children, which proved very popular. Lectures were given by Mr. Morton, Nance, Miss Macnamara and Mr. Whitworth. A public performance of plays and ballad-mimes drew a packed house.

Two short Rural Schools were held on May 24th and 25th, by Miss Macnamara and Mr. Norman Marshall at Horncastle in Lincolnshire and on March 6th and 7th by Miss Macnamara at Preston in Lancashire. On May 2nd there were two One-day Schools; one in Monmouthshire, staffed by Mr. Cyril Wood and Miss Frances Mackenzie, the other arranged by the Manchester Dramatic Federation, at which Mrs. Monica Ewer lectured.

CLUB ROOM.

The membership of the Club Room now numbers 317. The arrangements made with Miss Stirling for the supply of refreshments are appreciated by members. The Club Room is now open from 10.30 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day except Sundays. A series of debates which proved most popular was arranged as follows:—Mr. J. T. Grein on "Some Bones to Pick," Mr. Ernest Milton on "The Preservation of Illusion in the Theatre," Dame May Whitty on "The Stage as a Profession," Miss Rose Macaulay on "What Makes a play Good," and Mr. R. C. Sherriff on "My Views on Hollywood." The Council's thanks are due to these ladies and gentlemen. It is hoped to continue these debates next Autumn, but if the Club is to be permanently established it is essential that its membership should reach the minimum of 500 members.

THE LIBRARY.

The Library Committee report further progress in the development of the Library. 3,051 volumes have been added during the past year, bringing the total number of volumes acquired by the Library since its inception to 20,362. (This figure includes the replacement of some 1,590 volumes which have at various times since 1925 become too worn for further use or have been lost. The actual number of volumes now in the Library is therefore 18,772.)

The following statistics of books issued during the year are interesting, as showing that members of the League appreciate the value of the Library and make full use of it. The total number of issues during the year was 30,914, an increase of 2,157 on the previous year. Of this number 20,930 were plays from the Lending Library, 3,229 were critical works, and 6,755 were reading sets. The increase in the number of reading sets sent out was 1,458.

The most notable addition to the Library during the year has been the Encyclopædia Britannica (14th Edition). This has long been wanted and should prove of great service to members using the Reference Library. Other books of interest added during the past year are:—*Monumenta Scenica*. Vols. XI & XII., George Harris: *Designs* (Presented by Mr. Alec L. Rea), Duranty: *Theatre des Marionnettes du Jardin des Tuileries*, W. A. Propert: *The Russian Ballet, 1921-29*.

The Committee and Council wish to express their thanks to Mrs. Morrison, Mr. St. John Ervine, Mr. Alec L. Rea, the St. Andrews' Society, Leytonstone and others who have made presentations to the Library during the year.

AMATEUR SOCIETIES

Experienced Actor-Producer is available for next Season.

Costume or Modern.

Ensure success by engaging a Professional Producer of wide experience.

Send particulars of impending Productions.

Box 31, Advert. Dept.
British Drama League

ST. PANCRAS PEOPLE'S THEATRE

36 TAVISTOCK PLACE, W.C.1

Telephone: Museum 9489

Honorary Director: Miss EDITH NEVILL
Director and Producer: ROSE PEZARO

FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS

June 4th, 5th and 6th.

LITTLE EYHOLF

Henrik Ibsen

June 11th, 12th and 13th

THE TRIAL OF MARY DUGAN

Bayard Veiller

VACANCIES for:—

- MEN of experience and ability for AMATEUR REPERTORY COMPANY.
- BEGINNERS & STUDENTS (Men, Women & Children) for Crowd Work, etc. Practical Tuition in Acting, Elocution, Stage Dancing, Deportment, Make-up, etc. Special Section for Play Production.
- VOLUNTEER HELPERS of all kinds.

Apply by letter to office.

THE THEATRICAL GARDEN PARTY

The Jolliest Event of the London Season.

ALL

ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR

50

the Stars

In aid of the ORPHANS of the STAGE PROFESSIONS

Side Shows

of the Stage
and Screen
will assist.

TUESDAY, JUNE 16th, 1931

3-7

ROYAL HOSPITAL GARDENS
CHELSEA, S.W.

New and

Old

Favourites.

Tickets (bought beforehand) 3/- each Tickets (bought on the day) 5/- each

Rover Tickets (to admit everywhere) £2 2s. each

At all Theatres and Agencies and 8 Adam Street, Adelphi, W.C.2.

Please mention "DRAMA" when replying to advertisements

THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

President :
LORD HOWARD DE WALDEN.

Vice-Presidents :
THE EARL OF CRAWFORD AND BALCARRES
VISCOUNT BURNHAM
THE RIGHT HON. J. R. CLYNES, M.P.
SIR MICHAEL SADLER, K.C.S.I.
MISS LENA ASHWELL, O.B.E.

Hon. Treasurer :
ALEC L. REA

SIR J. MARTIN HARVEY
SIR BARRY V. JACKSON
ALBERT RUTHERSTON
PROF. E. J. DENT

Chairman of the Council :
HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER

Secretary :
GEOFFREY WHITWORTH

Council :
KENNETH R. BARNES
B. J. BENSON
F. S. BOAS, LL.D.
G. W. BISHOP
MISS D. M. CARRITT
LEWIS CASSON
L. BOUGHTON CHATWIN
MRS. NESFIELD COOKSON
MISS EDITH CRAIG
D. HAYDN DAVIES

J. FISHER WHITE
MISS ELSIE FOGERTY
LT.-COL. C. HEADLAM, D.S.O.
MISS MARY KELLY
HOLFORD KNIGHT, K.C., M.P.
THE HON. MRS. ALFRED
LYTTELTON, D.B.E.
THE EARL OF LYTTON
W. LEE MATHEWS

WALTER PAYNE
L. DU GARDE PEACH, Ph.D.
MISS CONSTANCE RADFORD
C. HAROLD RIDGE
R. DOUGLAS ROBERTSON
GEORGE O. SHARMAN
W. J. TURNER
R. C. WALLHEAD, M.P.
MRS. GORDON WHITMORE

Library Committee :
F. S. BOAS, LL.D., *Chairman.*
H. F. RUBINSTEIN
ALBERT RUTHERSTON
ALEC L. REA

JOHN DRINKWATER
ASHLEY DUKES
SIR NIGEL PLAYFAIR

C. J. SISSON, D.Litt.
GEOFFREY WHITWORTH
NORMAN WILKINSON

THE aim of the British Drama League is to assist the development of the Art of the Theatre and to promote a right relation between Drama and the Life of the Community.

MEMBERSHIP of the League is open to all persons who are concerned with the practice or enjoyment of the Art of the Theatre, and may be acquired by the payment of an annual subscription of £1 is.

Any organised society or group of not less than ten persons may become affiliated to the Drama League, and as an affiliated body shall acquire and exercise all the privileges afforded by the League, including free receipt of "Drama" monthly and the use of the League's Library. The minimum affiliation fee is £1 is.

Further particulars from the Hon. Secretary,

8 ADELPHI TERRACE, LONDON, W.C.2

Telephone : Temple Bar 8507-8

